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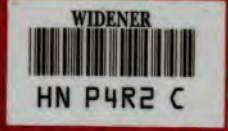

NG OF JUBILEE

AND OTHER POEMS

MRS. R. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN

A SONG OF JUBILEE

AND OTHER POEMS.

" . . . . the tapering spire of Avon's church,
Where sleep the illustrious dead; . . . ."

" . . . . the tapering spire of Avon's church,
Where sleep the illustrious dead; . . . ."

6

A

SONG OF JUBILEE

AND

OTHER POEMS.

BY

MRS. R. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN
(MRS. LEITH-ADAMS).

LONDON
KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, & CO.
1 PATERNOSTER SQUARE.
1887.

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FROM
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DEDICATED

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TO

HER GRAND DUCAL HIGHNESS,

MARIE, PRINCESS OF LEININGEN,

WHOSE MANY WORDS AND ACTS OF KINDNESS

TO ME AND MINE

MUST EVER BE GRATEFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY

HELD IN

REMEMBRANCE.

STRATFORD-ON-AVON,
June 1887. *Year of Jubilee.*

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JUBILEE ODE.

JUBILEE ODE.

Jubilate! Jubilate! raise the strain of joy and
praise,
For a life-work nobly purposed—perfect after
many days,
Jubilate! Jubilate! let the welkin ring with
cheers,
Bringing greeting to our Lady—England's Queen
for fifty years;
Fifty years of strong endeavour, fifty years of
purpose high
Wrought out slowly to fulfilment, years whose
record cannot die
While within one English bosom still the love
abideth sure
Of whatever things are noble, and whatever things
are pure.

Jubilate! Jubilate! fling the glad news far and wide,
Let the sound of many voices rise and swell on every side,
Grow and gather—roll and thunder—eddying on from land to land,
Till its echo reach the bound'ry of her Empire's furthest strand;
Till the whole earth hear the story, what these fifty years have been,
How she proved herself true woman—how she proved herself true Queen.
First the Maiden—Ah, the burden! pressing down that fair young head,
Crowned a Queen when scarce a woman—kneeling by her maiden-bed,
With her white hands softly folded, lifting all her heart in prayer,
Doubts and fears and hopes commending to a Heavenly Father's care.

Then the Wife, with one beside her, worthy of so high a place,
Faithful helpmeet, guide and comfort, crowned with every courteous grace,
Toiling for the nation's welfare, friend and counsellor in one;
Calm and wise, and never weary till the task in hand was done.
Then the Widow—hushed a moment be our songs of joy and praise—
Kneel we by our Royal Lady in those bitter, troublous days—
Days of sorrow, days of mourning, days of desolation dread,
When a nation wept its wisest—and a wife her dearest—dead!

. . . . . .

Only once in all our life-day may our sun stand high at noon,

Only once may shine the brightness which must
vanish all too soon;
Yet the afterglow of even count we not as all
unblest,
When our sunset melts in radiance, and the storms
are laid to rest.
So to her, our Royal Lady, may the years, with
still increase,
Bring their garnered store of comfort, bring their
perfect gift of peace.
And the love of loyal millions, children's children
on her knee,
Woo her from all thoughts of sorrow in her year
of Jubilee.
Jubilate! Jubilate! fling the glad news far and
wide;
Let the sound of many voices rise and swell on
every side;
Grow and gather—roll and thunder—eddying on
from land to land,

Till its echo reach the bound'ry of her Empire's
furthest strand.
Jubilate! Jubilate! let the welkin ring with
cheers,
Bringing greeting to our Lady—England's Queen
for fifty years!

IN MEMORIAM.

H.R.H. LEOPOLD, DUKE OF ALBANY.

WHEN once a Martyred King to his last rest
Was borne, the very heavens grew pitiful,
And from their overhanging canopies
Let fall upon him, as he passed beneath,
A glistening shroud of snow. In after days
Remembering it, men called him *The White King.*

. . . . . .

No snow drops now from winter skies, as home
We bear our dead. All spring flowers blossoming
Tell of awakening life; while in the woods
The cushat, swelling out his tender breast,
Pregnant with dreams of summer joys to come,
Coos to his trembling mate. Spring's gentle hand

Touches a sleeping world and bids it rise;
And—'mid the universal life, death takes
Its sternest semblance—breaks our hearts the more
Since all things round us seem so glad to live:
Yet stay—we too may find a fair white shroud
To cover our fair dead, and lend to death
A beauty heaven-sent. . . . The fair, white pall
Of an unsullied name lies on his breast—
And thus we lay him low—our dear White Prince.

March 29, 1884.

STRATFORD-ON-AVON CHURCHYARD.

IN AUTUMN.

THE water laps along the wall and sings
A lullaby to those who sleep engirt
By God's encircling arm. Above, the rooks
Chant a hoarse requiem o'er their summer joys
Of nest and nestling gone: a softer note—
The low, far distant murmur of the mill—
All these in harmony, and, over all
And dominating all, the sweetest chimes
That ever dropped o'er river and o'er lea
Fall from the tapering spire of Avon's church,
Where sleep the illustrious dead, where lies the
dust
Of him whose fame immortal liveth still,
And will live evermore; since for all time,

All hearts, all eyes that weep, all lips that smile,
He spake with tongue of fire, and cunning art
To read in human nature like a book,
And tell the story to a listening world.
The Year rests from its labours: soon will sleep
With stirless, snow-clad breast, while dearth of leaves
Betrays the linnet's nest. But rest alone,
Not death is with us yet awhile, for see!
The scattered sunshine of the yellow leaves
Gives light and colour 'mid the greys and browns,
And roses kiss the cross where "Dear child" lies,
As though they fain would say—"She is not dead
But sleepeth here, and we keep loving watch
Beside her till the dawn of God's own day."
Now stealeth on the hush of eventide—
The moor-hen gliding to her osier bed
Ripples the water where the shadows sleep—
Shadows as perfect as the things they seem,
Like loving memories in a faithful heart.

The bells have ceased, and robin sings good-night
In sad, sweet, plaintive song. Upon my heart
Falls, too, the hush and silence of deep peace,
And sight and sound are gathered unto this—
"Beyond the creeds of men, that libel God,
Beyond the discord of the many deeds
Done in the name of Christ, yet not of Him—
Beyond the wrangling and the strife of tongues,
Forever shines the blessed light of Truth."

LOVE'S AWAKENING.

AN IDYL.

It was a summer's eve, and underneath
The shadowy trees you kissed me. In my heart
That moment came a new, fair world to light—
A world illumined by a rosy glow
Of new, fond thoughts, and passionate, sweet joy!
If you had left me there, and nevermore
Mine eyes had seen you—had I never heard
Your voice again, nor felt the tender clasp
That held me (willing captive!) to your heart,
No less would that new world have still been mine.
Like the immortal soul of man, once called
Into a being that can know no end,
So was it with my love—it could not die.

. . . . . .

When you were gone I gloated o'er the thought

That you were mine, dear love! I pressed my
hands
Above the throbbing heart, that beat so fast
With knowledge of its own intense delight.
I slept—and in my dreams you kissed me still,
And, like the shadow of some lovely thing,
Came all the sweetness of my joy again!
Ere long the day-dawn came upon the world,
Breaking in lines of light across the sky,
That grew to sunrise beauty—as my heart
Had grown to brightness by your love. Ah me!
In all this world was there one other soul
So steeped in happiness as mine that day!
I could not rest, or calmly think—I longed
To be alone among the fields and trees,
For I was stifled with sweet thoughts, and love
Ran riot in my heart. The springing corn—
The little blue-eyed flower, that reared its head
Out from among the green spears of the grass
To take a peep at what the world was like—

The breeze that whispered in the maple-leaves—
The song of every tiny bird, whose throat
Swelled with the sweetness of his gladsome song—
The clouds that floated on the summer sky—
All seemed to know my secret, and to say:
"He loves you, loves you, loves you—only you!"

. . . . . .

Life drifts us on—the end must needs be near—
Joys fade, hopes die; we toil, and weep, and pray,
The flower is often far less fair to view
Than was the bud; or, if the flower be fair,
The wind comes, and the rain, and, bowed to earth,
The lovely head lies low. I, too, have known
My share of woman's joys and tears; but yet
I can look back upon the changeful way,
And thank the dear God, watching over all,
In that to me it once was given to know
Such perfect joy as in that hour when first
You kissed me, darling, and my heart awoke!

MISUNDERSTOOD.

AN IDYL.

WILL he not come?—The sleeping shadows lie
All softly on the grass; the faint breeze stirs
The bloom upon the may, and steals its scent,
Then wanders indolently on. My heart,
Filled with fond hopes, is fain to sing in rhyme
With yonder thrush, whose speckled throat swells
forth
In overflowing song of spring-tide joy!
The soft chirp of the insect in the grass,
Sunning itself upon some fragile spray;
The lowing of the cattle far away
Beside the brook:—these sounds are all I hear.
Nay—not alone—for ever and anon

My fancy plays me false—I think I hear
A footfall, and my heart leaps up and throbs.

. . . . . .

Will he not come ?—Will not my longing draw
Him to me ?—Can he leave me thus, and let
The cruel words of tongues that love dispeace
For ever come between us ? Will no voice
Go tell him that I love him ?—that the earth
Were one great void to me if he were gone ?
Angel of pity !—See the shadows grow,
The glory of the afternoon begins
To fade, and robin's plaintive even-song
Sounds like the faint cry of a breaking heart.

. . . . . .

Have I let all my life's perfection slip
From out my grasp for lack of one bold word ?—
Could I have said—" *Their words are false, O turn*
And look into mine eyes, dear love, and read
The story of my truth ! " would he have turned

And held me fast for ever and for aye ?
What shines above the trees ? A crescent moon
Of silver light, while in the far-off sky
Fast die the tints of sunset.—Coward hand !
Close fast the casement on the night, that for
Thy lonely heart shall know no fair sweet dawn !

DRIFTED APART.

AN INVOCATION.

LET the day dawn!
I wander in a dark and lonely night,
And lift my feeble hands, and cry for light!
I stumble on the rough and thorny way,
And, groping, find no hand to be my stay;
While, far away, so that I scarce can hear,
Linger the echoes of a voice, so dear
That e'en this cruel darkness would not be
All joyless, could it murmur low to me
Such words as in my memory softly shine
(Like jewels in a casket) through all time—
Let the day dawn!

Let the day dawn!
Once as I sat beside his knee, and read

All softly to myself, he bent his head
To see what words I muttered. 'Twas an old
French song; the same sweet tale so often told
In every language, and in every clime,
And *à vos pieds et dans vos bras* the rhyme;
I raised my eyes (two wells of love that he
Straight fathomed with his own), then tremblingly
My lips clung to his hand—Ah, wherefore rise
Such visions—mournful ghosts, with sad, sweet
eyes?
Let the day dawn!

Let the day dawn!
You ask me had I known the bitter cost
Beforehand of my joy, would I have lost,
From dread of coming pain, one hour of bliss?
Would I have turned aside from that first kiss
Of love? Why, though each coin were a drop
Of crimson blood from out my heart, 'twere
not

Too great a price! See, darling! all my pain
I count as nothing for so dear a gain—
But sometimes in these lonely, weary days,
My heart cries out for you, and, weeping, prays—
Let the day dawn!

Let the day dawn!
Ah! could I only once look in his face—
Once only feel again the dear embrace
Of arms that fold about me as I sleep
And dream him near—then wake alone to weep!
Be still, sad heart, for surely thy dark night
Is broken by a faint, far ray of light—
A hope that though I never more shall rest
My weary, weary head upon his breast,
Though in this life I see his face no more,
Still on the waves of the Eternal shore
Shall the day dawn!

FORGET ME NOT.

FORGET me not—I do but go
  A little step away,
And you shall find me waiting there
  In God's eternal day.

Forget me not—the same fond smile
  That greets your coming now,
Shall greet you then—but there shall be
  No shadow on my brow.

Forget me not—let loving thought
  Still weave its linkèd chain,
And smiles and tears of bygone years
  In memory live again.

Forget me not—I do but go
  A little step away,
And you shall find me waiting there
  In God's eternal day.

January 27, 1884.

IN TIME OF WAR.

THE sad wife looks in her husband's face
  Through a blinding mist of tears;
She strives for calm, but a smothered sob
  Tells all her loving fears.
"*God give me strength,*" she cries aloud,
  "*To smile one smile at last!*"
(Like sun on April shower it shone,
  As from her sight he passed.)
Men go forth in battle array;
Women are left to weep and pray!

"To weep and pray!" Ah, me! what prayers—
  What anguished prayers, in vain,
Rise up from passionate souls, that ne'er
  Shall find their loved again!

Prayers—that the lips that pressed their own
So closely, may not lie,
Blackened and parched by a horrible drought,
Beneath the silent sky—
Men go forth in battle array;
Women are left to weep and pray!

With none to watch but the stars of heaven—
No hand to ease their pain—
(Better the bullet had been more sure,
And their darling straightway slain.)
Who can tell of the weary days,
The dark and silent night,
When we long for morn that we may cry,
"What news—what news of the fight?"
Men go forth in battle array;
Women are left to weep and pray!

The mother thinks of her first-born son,
When she kissed him as he slept

A babe on her breast, and, as she thinks,
  He is lying dead, unwept!
And his dying hand has groped about
  And clasped a dead hand near—
(Well that the mother cannot see
  The boy she held so dear.)
    Men go forth in battle array;
    Women are left to weep and pray!

Lo, gracious Lord, before Thy throne
  A great white mist comes up;
'Tis woman's tears in anguish shed,
  Drinking a bitter cup!
O, Thou great God of battles, hear!
  Turn—turn the sword away—
Send peace upon Thy fair wide world;
  Set far this dreadful day—
    When men go forth in battle array,
    And women are left to weep and pray!

AT THE CALL OF GOD.

A LAY OF ST. ANNE'S LIFEBOAT.

Clang! clang! clang! ringing out through the
sough and the roar,
Over the riot and rush of the wind, and the swirl
of the sea;
Clear and stern as the voice of a chief in the tumult
of war,
Cheering the heart of the weary and bracing the
feeble knee;
Shrill and high through the storm-laden air, and
the wrack-hidden sky,
Out o'er the wind-tossed sea, and out o'er the rain-
beaten sod—
Hark!—the alarm-bell flings out its sudden, im-
perious cry—

Flings out its summons to dare and to die—*at the Call of God!*

. . . . . .

And far in the firelight glow of the cottages under the hill,
Where the fisherman's path climbs up from the shore to the sandy dune,
Little ones pause in their play with a sudden foreboding of ill,
And the song dies out on the lips, broken off in the midst of the tune.
Only the kettle sings on its monotonous chant from the hob,
But the good-wife's hand that would lift it, falls nerveless and dead at her side
As her quick-coming breathing is strangled and choked by a rising sob,
And the cold clutch tugs at her heart of a terror she fain would hide,

And the sunburnt cheek of the man grows pale
for a moment's space,
And the half-filled pipe drops down from the clasp
of the rugged hand
As he turns with a chill at his heart to gaze on
her death-white face.
Husband and wife—they are silent a while—for—
they understand. . . .
Then, with a rush of the blood and a flush of the
sunburnt cheek,
The great heart leaps to the deed; . . . "My
God! 'tis the Lifeboat peal!
We mun gang, lass . . . happen there's men i'
the wreck we be goin' to seek,
Wi' woives an' childer at whoam same as we, and
as loves 'em as weel.
God be wi' us, my lass, and I reckon we'll save
'em yet,
Though there's never a light i' the cloud, nor a rift
i' the ugly sky.

Little one, hast'na a kiss for thy daddy? God bless thee, my pet.
Wife, dunna fret, we'se come back to thee, gie us —a—kiss—good-bye!"

. . . . . .

Hurry, and bustle, and tramp, they are down on the wind-swept beach,
Where the sea-spray mingles dark with the dust of the sandy dunes,
And over the crests of the billows, as far as the eye can reach,
Danger and death are writ in the lines of the foam-traced runes;
Nought of danger and death do they reck, those true Lancashire hearts.
See!—they have launched her at last through the wind and the surf and the spray,
And their strong arms bend to the oar, and the billow is cloven and parts

As the surf falls back from her bows like a baffled beast of prey.

. . . . . .

Night, deep night, and the babes are asleep, but the sweethearts and wives—

(How should *they* sleep ?) gather thick in a throng on the crest of the down,

Watching the sea where their loved ones are fighting the fight for their lives,

Watch through the livelong night till the sun rise over the town,

And the minutes grow into years and the years to an endless pain,

And the glance that was hope is despair, and the prayer dies out on the lip,

As the daylight dawns on the Ribble, and over the restless main—

Never a sign, ah God ! of a boat coming back from the ship !

. . . . .

For out in the night and the darkness the fight
has been fought, and the light
Rises faint on a field where the fight has been lost
and been—*won*—
Won by the sea. *Not so!* They are *winners* who
died here to night.
Won? Ay! Is it *not* winning to die for a duty
done?

. . . . . .

Past is the din of the storm, long past, yet its
echoes are ringing
Even to-day in our hearts, and will ring till we
lie 'neath the sod,
And still through the midst of our sorrow a low
Jubilate is singing—
"*Praise to the heroes who dared and who died at
the Call of God!*"

THE MISSING SHIP.

A LITANY.

A SHADOW on the land—a cruel dread
Upon men's hearts; sad thoughts of what may be—
A bitter cry from those who watch and wait
In agony, a "message from the sea."
For all who travel on the waters wide
We do beseech thee, hear us, gracious Lord!

The people kneel—the pastor's voice is heard
Leading the prayer—then mingled voices rise
In full response—(each worshipper methinks
Must pray with swelling heart and tear-dimmed eyes,)
For all who travel on the waters wide
We do beseech thee, hear us, gracious Lord!

Then in my saddened mind I picture scenes
Of such heartrending anguish on the ship,
Whose fate we know not, that I lift my heart
In prayer again, and cry with quiv'ring lip
For all who travel on the waters wide
We do beseech thee, hear us, gracious Lord!

The mother holds her baby to her breast
And croons a little song to keep it still,
Full knowing (ah! poor mother!) that ere long
The waves shall have her darling at their will.
For all who travel on the waters wide
We do beseech thee, hear us, gracious Lord!

She wraps her shawl around to keep it warm,
She holds it closer, closer to her heart—
I think the cruel waves will have their work
To drift the mother and the babe apart—
For all who travel on the waters wide
We do beseech thee, hear us, gracious Lord!

I hear the children at their father's knee,
Ask, "Why are all of you so sad? and why
Does mother cry, and kiss us every one,
As if she meant to bid us all good-bye?"
For all who travel on the waters wide
We do beseech thee, hear us, gracious Lord!

Nor less than these our tender pity claim
Hearts torn by mocking hopes, and cruel fears,
Watching and waiting—full of dreadful doubt—
Crying to God, through blinding mist of tears—
For all who travel on the waters wide
We do beseech thee, hear us, gracious Lord!

O Thou who to the new-shorn lamb, the wind
Of Thy great Heaven dost temper—Thou whose hand
Doth hold the waters of the deep—bow down
Thine ear, and hear the voices of the land—
For all who travel on the waters wide
We do beseech thee, hear us, gracious Lord!

THE BABY.

ONLY three—still called "the Baby,"
  Very fragile—very fair—
Crowned the King of all the household,
  With a crown of golden hair.

Waiting at the mother's doorway,
  Sitting crouched upon the floor—
Sobbing softly—but how sadly!
  With his face against the door. . . .

"*Don't you hear the Baby crying?*
  Mother . . . are you still asleep?"
(We who listened could but wonder,
  And in silent pity weep).

Then he hushed his sobs to listen,
  If perchance his loving prayer

Might not call forth some fond answer
  From the still form lying there.

But it came not; only silence
  Answered all his tearful prayers,
And we heard the little bare feet
  Patter softly up the stairs.

Day by day, "the Baby" faded,
  Droopingly the golden head
Hung like some poor wilted blossom,
  Early numbered with the dead.

Cold the mother's breast that oft had
  Pillowed that dear head—Ah, me!
Could she "hear the Baby crying,"
  In that land we cannot see?

Soon the time came when God's Angel
  Took the little soul away—
Took our "Baby" to its mother
  At the dawning of the day.

Still he lay, and very lovely,
  Little waxen features fair,
Framed in all the golden glory
  Of his shining, silken hair.

God had heard "the Baby" crying,
  God had taken him away,
He was no more sad and lonely,
  No more motherless that day.

THE ABSENT MOTHER'S DREAM.

GOD sent me such a blessèd dream,
As welcome as the day's first beam
To weary traveller—for I thought
Mine eyes had found what long they sought
In the lone night-watches.

The moonbeams fell across the bed,
And touched with light each golden head,
While, by my darlings (softly sleeping),
Were two bright angels vigil keeping,
In the still night-watches.

"Fear not harm shall e'er betide them,
We are watching here beside them;
Fear not evil shall come nigh them,
With God's angels standing by them
In the still night-watches!"

It ceased—that soft and heavenly strain—
I woke to solitude again,
But peace (like dew on drooping flowers)
Had fallen on me in those hours
Of the still night-watches.

ON SEEING HENRY IRVING AS LOUIS XI.

"A FINE presentment," "vastly clever," so you say?
"As good a thing as you have seen for many a day."
Well—be it so—to me things take a different hue,
And what to you seems counterfeit, to me seems *true.*
To me no triumph this of histrionic art,
Where stroke by stroke the actor's skill creates a part—
Not so, the craftiest statesman here, and worst of kings,
Bares to a shuddering world his own life's secret springs.

Louis before us lives, his hidden life unrolled,
In four short acts tells more than ever Comines
told
Of ruthless hate, stern purpose, wolfish mirth,
whose touch
Blistered; mistrusting all, yet trusting over-much
To relics, fetish-images, he stands revealed,
The boldest coward-king that e'er did sceptre
wield.

. . . . . .

And this is art—to pierce sheer to the heart of
Life—
Down through the surface-play of passion or of
strife,
From scattered parts to build again the living
whole,
And make the outward act reveal the inner
soul.

. . . . . .

Therefore I—for my part—when critics, over-
keen,

Ask—"Have you Irving's study of King Louis
seen?
Had Garrick lived to-day, he sure had hailed him
brother,"
—Answer,
"I saw King Louis—*I forgot the other.*"

ALWAYS.

SHE stood when first I saw her face
  Beneath the trellised vine,
And listened with a pensive grace,
While at her feet flowed on apace
  The torrent of the Rhine.

About her web of golden hair
  The wanton breezes played,
Ah! in that misty evening air
The twilight landscape glimmered fair,
  But fairer still the maid!

I loved her for her loveliness
  That day when first we met,
But quickly did my heart confess,
Her grace was but the outer dress
  Of beauty deeper yet.

And though the locks are turned to grey
  That once were burnished gold,
Though wrinkles line the cheeks to-day
Where merry dimples used to play
  In those bright days of old,

Yet fair beyond all sculptor's art,
  Beyond all poet's dreams,
Her soul shines through the mortal part
Till every beat of that dear heart
  Celestial music seems.

And still beneath December's snow
  As through the summer weather,
Our love doth ever closer grow
As hand in hand through life we go—
  My wife and I together.

THE FIRST BUTTERFLY.

SWEET little flutterer, floating o'er the fence
Into my garden, like a living bloom—
Upborne on fair white wings, and strong desire
To taste the brightness that is newly born
Even as thou thyself—would thou couldst speak,
And with sweet piping voice tell out the joy
That fills thy tiny breast and speeds thy flight,
Making it all one trembling ecstasy—
Would thou couldst say in what warm, sheltered nook,
Hid from high winter winds and nipping frost,
Wrapped in brown swaddling clothes that clipped thee close,
And kept thee safe, the dreary months were passed—
Until at last, just when the currant-tree

Its rose-red pendants had put proudly forth,
And purple violets, peeping from the sod,
Sighed out sweet breath that sweetened all the world,
A ray of spring's pale sunshine touched thy heart,
And bid thee burst thy bonds, and stir, and *live*
As, at the touch of love, some sleeping soul
Stirs, and awakens to a dream of heaven!

. . . . . .

O little bird without a song! I love
Thy silent presence, floating in the light—
A living, perfect thing, when scarcely yet
The snow-white blossom crawls along the wall,
And not a daisy shows its star-like head
Amid the grass. Thou seem'st the first sweet note
Of one grand harmony that soon shall rise

With perfumed incense from the myriad flowers,
And song of happy birds in every tree,
Music of which I hear the echo now—
The summer's perfect fulness of delight!

SONNET.

WHERE, in the stillness of the summer night
We wandered by the margin of the mere,
And marked therein the love-star mirrored clear,
Or listened to the wild fowl's long-drawn flight.
Or where, when summer suns shone hot and bright,
Beneath the cedar sitting, we could hear
The whetstone grate upon the mower's shear,
Or the shrill corn-crake croaking her delight,
I wander now forlorn this winter-time,
The stars are hid—the mere is frozen black,
The corn-crake long has sought a softer clime.
O'er distant seas *his* vessel ploughs her track,
And only robin sings a hopeful rhyme
That spring will come and bring my loved one back.

SNOW.

DARKNESS upon the earth, and a dim fear
  In the low moaning of an icy wind,
  In the weird sigh of tree-tops intertwined,
And on the frozen surface of the mere.

. . . . . .

The snow has fallen. . . All the western sky
  Fades into purple flushed with lingering gold,
  And o'er the pearl-tipped firs of the white wold
A golden moon is rising silently.

. . . . . .

O thou that shrinkest from a coming pain,
  Be this thy comfort as the clouds increase,
It comes thy soul for higher bliss to train.

Face thy griefs bravely, knowing they shall cease
In God's good time, and thou shalt surely gain
For thy transfigured life the gift of peace.

HARVEST-TIDE.

SONG.

"He came a-down the lane to me,
(My own dear love, I loved so well!)
I met him in the fragrant shade
To hear the tale he had to tell.

"My own," he said, and held me close,
"I have a sorry tale to tell,
Across the sea I now must roam,
So kiss me, love—and say farewell!"

"He left me when the corn was young,
And when it waved a golden sea,
They told me that my own dear love
Would nevermore come back to me!

"No sadder maid that harvest-tide,
  Wandered among the stookèd sheaves,
Or watched through tears the amber light
  That filtered through a weft of leaves!

"The grain was garnered in, the trees
  Stood bare against the autumn sky,
The robin piped a sad, sweet song,
  Keening o'er summer days gone by.

"I wandered in the lane at eve,
  My eyes with rising tears were blind—
I heard a rustling in the leaves,
  I heard a stealing step behind.

"I turned to look—but as I turned
  My love's strong arm had clasped me round,
I could not speak—I could but weep—
  My love was lost—my love was found!"

From Madelon Lemoine.

CAROL.

CHILD Jesu lay on Mary's knee,
And opened wide were His sad eyes,
"Ah, sleep, my little King," said she,
"Ah, sleep—the stars are in the skies."
Then round about that wondrous pair
Angelic voices filled the air—

"We sing the story of the Saviour's birth,
Peace and goodwill to all on earth,
Rest for the weary and the worn,
Since Christ is born."

Child Jesu's eyes were closed in sleep,
And as he slept that mother mild
Did bend her head and vigil keep
With tears, above the heavenly child.

And still around the wondrous pair
Angelic voices filled the air—

" *We sing the story of the Saviour's birth,*
Peace and goodwill to all on earth,
Pardon to man's repentant sigh,
Since Christ shall die."

Child Jesu woke from sleep again,
And His glad eyes were opened wide,
And Mary's heart was joyous then,
And all of Mary's tears were dried,
While still around the wondrous pair,
Angelic voices filled the air.

" *We sing the story of the Saviour's birth,*
Peace and goodwill to all on earth,
Theirs is the glory—theirs the prize,
Since Christ shall rise."

From Geoffrey Stirling.

THE LADYE'S RIDE.

THE LADYE'S RIDE.

A LEGEND OF BRITTANY.

THE snow lies thick on field and fen
  (Dark is the night and late the hour),
The old grey wolf has left his den
In the haunted forest of Elbihen,
  And the white owl hoots in the donjon tower.

Who is this that is riding alone,
  (Holy Mathurin, shield us well!)
Can she not hear by the cromlech stone
How the cursèd poulpicans gibber and groan
  As they dance the dance of hell?

Can she not see through the gloom of night
  (Gouts of gore on the white-palled lea),

A form in phantom armour dight,
The phantom form of a murdered knight,
With his head upon his knee?

Hath she no fear of the icy breath
(Sea mists rolling athwart the hill)
Of the water-demon, whose touch is death,
As with outstretched fingers he hurrieth
To clutch, and to clasp, and to kill?

The Ladye knoweth not pain nor fear
(Strength of love that is strong as the grave),
Never sound from afar nor sight from anear
Can pierce to her heart through eye or ear,
For she rides, she rides to save.

. . . . . .

Three long days hath she fasted and prayed,
(Mighty with Heaven are the scourge and the fast),
Three chill nights in sackcloth arrayed
She hath wearied the Holy Saints for aid,
And the Saints have heard at last.

Thrice hath she prayed to her angry lord,
(Black is the frown when the blood runs high),
Thrice hath he answered with hand on sword,
"They have beaten my herald, the rebel horde,
I have sworn it—they shall die!"

"Ah! pity them! pity them, sweet!" she said
(Tears of pearl in the sapphire eyes),
"He asked for the tax, and they had no bread,
And their wives were starving, their babes were dead,
Is it wonder they were not wise?"

Thrice hath she pleaded, and pleaded in vain
(Stern and strong is the rancour of hate),
To-night she hath pleaded once again,
And to-night at last he hath pity ta'en,
If only it be not too late.

She holds the pardon with sign and seal
(Twilight falls upon land and sea),

Turns to her knights with a wild appeal,
"Will no man ride to the rock of Niel
And save the town for me?"

They love the Ladye passing well
(Love must ever to love reply),
But none for her sake dare spring to selle,
For to-night is the night when the spirits of Hell
Have power o'er earth and sky.

And many a weary league is the ride
(Wild winds sweep o'er the billows free),
To where from the waste of waters wide
Island at flood, but at ebb-flow dried,
The rock rises sheer from the sea.

Swift, too swift doth the time speed past,
(Swift and sure are the steps of fate),
If it reach not the town ere the sunrise cast
Its rays on the rock—they have breathed their last,
And the pardon has come too late.

She hath breathed a vow to the Virgin's shrine
  (Ave Maria, hear our prayer),
She hath traced on her breast the sacred sign
Which the demons fear, of the Cross divine,
  She hath fled down the winding stair.

She hath entered the charger's stall alone,
  (Loud and long is the mirth i' the hall),
She hath tightened the girths of the gallant roan,
She hath loosed the rein from its ring of stone,
  She hath led him forth from his stall.

Untouched the great gate backward swings
  (Who dare doubt that the Saints have might),
One touch on his mane, and in selle she springs,
The clang of his hoofs on the drawbridge rings,
  Then away through the gloom-wrapped night.

. . . . . .

See! they have seen her, the sprites of hell!
  (Bat-winged rout on the midnight dank,)

They have left their dance with an echoing yell,
And they follow the chase o'er moor and fell
  Close, close to the stout roan's flank.

Nearer and nearer they press behind
  (Swift hawk-talons to rend and tear),
But the Ladye's eyes they for love are blind,
And 'tis only the stout steed scents on the wind
  That the spirits of doom are there.

Closer ! their claws on the crupper they lay
  (Jesu shield her from death and shame),
And the swift hawk-talons are stretched to slay,
But swifter the flash 'twixt the fiends and their prey
  Of a sword of living flame.

Back shrink in terror the sprites of hell
(Glory to God in the height be given),

Cower and fly, for they know too well
The sword of the angel Gabriel,
  That guards the gate of heaven.

. . . . . .

One toss of his head as he onward hies
  (Meteor flash of the tangled mane),
And swifter and swifter the good steed flies :
He must reach the rock ere the sun shall rise,
  And the stars have begun to wane.

Swift he speeds o'er the woodland track
  (Tree-tops weaving a tangled net),
Not one quick beat do the stout hoofs slack,
Though the rough roots rise on the pathway black,
  And the winter moon has set.

One stride more, and they reach the wold
  (Woodland ends where the path grows light),

But a red glare gleams on her beads of gold,
For the midnight robbers have sprung from their hold
And have clutched her bridle tight.

"Gold! is it gold you would have?" she cries
(Little she recks of the torn ear's pain),
She hath flung them her ear-rings and rosaries,
And the golden brooch with her Lord's device,
But still they hold her rein.

She hath snatched up the mace from the saddle bow,
(Holy Mathurin, send her aid!)
Right and left with a sudden blow
She hath laid on each hand a ruffian low,
And the rest fall back dismayed.

One swift touch on the good roan's side
(Well he knoweth his Ladye's need),

He hath cleared the dark wood's edge at a stride,
And out o'er the heather away they ride,
  Though the arrows around them speed.

Swift o'er the moor where the gorse stands brown
  (Dull grey streaks in the eastern sky),
Swift where the moor to the cliff runs down,
And the cliff looks seaward out to the town,
  The roan steed's hoof-prints fly—

Swift o'er the sand doth he speed with his freight
  (Day-dawn dim o'er the waters wide),
Swift, but—ah God!—they have come too late
For the steep stone steps by the water-gate
  Are lashed by the rising tide.

One brief minute at gaze they stand
  (Foam-flecked wavelets his fetlocks splash),
Then a word from her voice, and a touch from her
    hand,

And they speed right on o'er the wave-washed
sand
And into the deep they dash.

Swept from his feet by the rising flood
(Swift sea-currents of foam-flecked brown),
His nostrils choked with the starting blood,
And his eyes all blind with the driving scud,
The good steed struggles on.

Wild waves beat on her wan worn face
(Shrill shrieks the wind 'mid the waters roar),
Thrice have they sunk, but Our Lady's grace
Doth bear them safe to the landing-place,
And at last they have reached the shore.

Faint and worn they have climbed the steep
(Sunrise ray on the high peaked rock)
To where in the square of the castle keep
The men stand bound, while the women weep
And the headsman rears his block.

She waves the Pardon high in air
  (Sunlight flood o'er the ocean shed),
She hath brought them hope in their despair—
Then Lady and roan in the castle square
  Together fall down dead.

They have raised her gently, that lady true
  (True heart brave to the bitter last),
They have pressed the red wine to the lips so
    blue—
But they mark the red wound where the barb sped
      through,
And they know that her soul has passed.

. . . . . .

Out on the Breton sea-coast lone
  (Life in death that will live for aye),
You may see her image carved in stone,
A Lady fair on a gallant roan—
  To witness to my lay.

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LINES WRITTEN TO COMMEMORATE THE OPENING,

BY

MR. HENRY IRVING,

OF THE

FOUNTAIN, GIVEN TO THE

PEOPLE OF STRATFORD-ON-AVON, BY

MR. CHILD,

ON THE 17TH OF OCTOBER, 1887, BY

MRS. R. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN

(MRS. LEITH-ADAMS).

A FRIEND ACROSS THE SEA.

Brothers yet—though ocean sever
  Your free land that fronts the West,
From the Churchyard by the river
  Where our common fathers rest.

Brothers by the twin rills flowing
  From one fount of English speech,—
By the common mem'ries glowing
  Deep within the heart of each.

It is yours, as it is ours—
  This most favoured spot of earth,
Where the spring-time crowned with flowers,
  Gave our gentle Shakespeare birth.

Here where every stone reminds us
  Of the name that each reveres,
Symbol of the love that binds us
  Changeless through the changing years,

Rear the Fountain; let the chiming
  Of its peal of silver bells,
Thrill like some sweet singer's rhyming,
  Every heart in Avon's dells.

Let its waters softly plashing,
  Woo the weary and the worn,
Brightly through the gloaming flashing,
  Brightly through the summer morn.

So the wanderer onward pressing,
  Thirsty, way-worn, weak of knee,
Halting here shall drink a blessing
  To his friend beyond the sea.

BERTHA LAFFAN,

STRATFORD-ON-AVON.

October 17th, 1887.

The following poem, written by Mrs. R. S. de C. Laffan on the opening of the fountain last Monday, was read by Mr. Henry Irving to the company assembled at Avon Bank on the eve of the ceremony:—

TO A FRIEND ACROSS THE SEA.

Brothers yet—though ocean sever
  Your free land that fronts the West
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